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DIRECTORATE OF
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CAMBODIA: Government may dismiss National Assembly.

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*CAMBODIA: THE GOVERNMENT NOW APPEARS OPPOSED TO RENEWING THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S MANDATE WHEN IT EXPIRES IN MID-OCTOBER.

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25X1 [REDACTED] SIRIK MATAK TOLD THE US AMBASSADOR IN PHNOM PENH THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PRESENT NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LEGISLATURE IS BASED ON THE ASSEMBLY'S OPPOSITION TO ITS POLICIES, ITS WIDESPREAD UNPOPULARITY, ITS ANACHRONISTIC CHARACTER, AND THE CORRUPTION OF ITS MEMBERS. MATAK SAID THAT THE ASSEMBLY'S FUTURE WOULD SOON BE RAISED WITH CHIEF OF STATE CHENG HENG, WHO HAS THE SOLE AUTHORITY TO PROLONG ITS MANDATE.

MATAK SEEMED CONFIDENT THAT THE ASSEMBLY'S DISMISSAL WOULD NOT PROVOKE ANY STRONG DOMESTIC POLITICAL REACTION, AND HE WENT ON TO POINT OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD DECLARE A STATE OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY TO SUPPORT ITS RULE WITHOUT AN ASSEMBLY. HE ALSO INTIMATED THAT SUCH A SITUATION COULD CONTINUE INDEFINITELY, BECAUSE HE DOES NOT FORESEE ANY EARLY PROSPECT FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS FOR EITHER EXECUTIVE OR LEGISLATIVE OFFICES. IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT PRIME MINISTER LON NOL SHARES MATAK'S VIEWS ON THIS ISSUE.

25X1 THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT APPEARS TO BE SUPPORTING THE MOVE TO DISMISS THE ASSEMBLY. [REDACTED]

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25X1 [REDACTED] ARMY OFFICERS ARE INCREASINGLY IRRITATED OVER THE DEPUTIES' INDEPENDENCE AND APPEAR TO BE INSENSITIVE TO THE FACT THAT IT WAS THE ASSEMBLY THAT CONSTITUTIONALLY OUSTED SIHANOUK, LEGITIMIZING THE PRESENT REGIME.

THE ASSEMBLY'S DISMISSAL WOULD IN EFFECT RATIFY THE SHIFT IN POWER TO THE ARMY THAT HAS ALREADY TAKEN PLACE. UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT MADE FRESH PROMISES OF EARLY ELECTIONS OR OTHER STEPS TO RENEW ITS MANDATE, THE ASSEMBLY DISMISSAL COULD ALIENATE POLITICAL REFORMISTS WHO VIEWED SIHANOUK'S OUSTER AS PAVING THE WAY FOR MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

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IT IS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS THE GOVERNMENT WILL SOFTEN ITS PRESENT ATTITUDE AND FASHION SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE THAT WOULD ENABLE THE ASSEMBLY TO CONTINUE TO SIT. IF YEM SAMBAUR, A PERSISTENT GOVERNMENT CRITIC, COULD BE PERSUADED TO STEP DOWN AS PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY, FOR EXAMPLE, THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT DECIDE TO PROLONG THE ASSEMBLY'S MANDATE ON AN "INDEFINITE" BASIS-- RATHER THAN GRANT IT ANOTHER ONE-YEAR EXTENSION.

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*Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense.

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